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INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS TASHKENT 000186

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: DEMARCHE ON DISTRACTED DRIVING DELIVERED

REF: 10 STATE 6703

[11.](#) (U) On January 27, Post delivered reftel information on distracted driving issues to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and requested the information be shared with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which has responsibility for enforcing driver safety. Post will report substantive responses septel.

GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING DISTRACTED DRIVING IN UZBEKISTAN

[12.](#) (U) Uzbekistan banned the use of mobile phones (talking or texting) while driving in December 2006. The Law "On introduction of amendments to the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Accountability" went into effect January 1, 2007. At the time, information about the new regulations was published in the local media, and relevant warnings were delivered to all cell phone subscribers via SMS messages. Post is not aware of any further nationwide awareness or education campaign regarding text messaging and/or cell phone use while driving since this time. (Note: As of January 1, 2009, the Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) reports there are approximately 13 million cell phone users (about 50% of the population), and Uzbekistan is the largest mobile telecommunications market in Central Asia.)

[13.](#) (SBU) Penalties for those caught violating mobile phone rules are as follows: upon a first offense, a driver must pay a fine equal to the current Uzbek monthly minimum wage (approximately USD 24). If a second violation takes place within less than one year, the government may impose a fine of the two to three times the minimum wage or suspend a driver's license for a period of up to six months. Despite the official ban on using cell phones while driving, the practice is widespread and enforcement is generally lax. It is not uncommon for violators simply to pay small bribes to avoid fines and paperwork. Recently, however, Post has noticed greater enforcement by local militia of seat belt rules, which must be worn by passengers in the front seat. Whether this is a harbinger of greater enforcement of other safety violations remains to be seen.

[14.](#) (SBU) The Ministry of Internal Affairs released the following data on fatalities, injuries or crashes for the eleven month period ending November 2009. The reliability or process for tallying statistics is unknown. Uzbekistan's population is 27 million.

- Accidents: 9,731;
- Died in accidents: more than 2,000, including 261 children;
- Injured in accidents: about 10,500, including about 1,500

children;

- Punished for use of cell phones: about 76,600 drivers;
- Punished for not using safety belts: more than 806,500 drivers;
and
- Punished for alcohol in blood: more than 64,200 drivers

Comment

15. (SBU) Post notes that many additional driving dangers exist in Uzbekistan. Many roads are poorly maintained, and often drivers ignore even basic traffic laws, including stopping at red lights. Post personnel commonly report multi-vehicle accidents on the way to and from work . While the Government of Uzbekistan acknowledges the dangers of talking and texting while driving, and Uzbekistan in fact outlaws cell phone use while driving, enforcement and awareness of traffic laws remains a key challenge.
End Comment.
NORLAND